TO BOLDLY GO:

KIRK/SPOCK SLASH FAN ART FROM THE COLLECTION OF BARBARA P. GORDON

VOL 1

Kirk/Spock Slash Fan Art
from the Collection of
Barbara P. Gordon
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"Without freedom of choice there is no creativity."

Captain James T. Kirk

Stardate 2019

Jenson Hillenbrand approached the Co-Prosperity Programming Council after discovering and acquiring a huge trove of 70's and 80's slash fiction illustrations. The art objects were collected by the slash artist and writer Barbara P. Gordon (pseud.), whose estate had gone to auction. Gordon, whose true identity remains a secret after their death, was a prolific and outspoken Chicago-based member of the Star Trek fandom. Over many years, they generated and collected a huge body of drawings and stories about Captain Kirk and Mister Spock in love.

These illustrations represent the birth of the now-prevalent world of slash fiction, which introduces queer narratives into popular fiction where there were once none. The original series of Star Trek is an especially important site for queer inclusion, as the ground-breakingly multiracial, multiethnic cast did not include a single queer character in their space utopia. Fans corrected that vision in slash long before the canon fiction finally included queer characters over four decades later in 2016's Star Trek Beyond and in 2017's Star Trek Discovery.

Born from deep space passions left unspoken, "K/S" or "Spirk" stories and art emerged in 1974 from often-anonymous members of the Star Trek fandom. They compiled and mailed their creations far and wide in typewritten, photocopied publications long before there was an internet for slash fiction to blossom within.

This collection represents one of the largest accumulations of original Kirk/Spock drawings ever publicly exhibited. Public Media Institute is honored to host this body of truly unique and historically vital paintings and drawings; we invite you to join us in appreciating them.

To Boldly Go Volume 1 contains a selection of works from the show.

Presented with the support of Co-Prosperity Programming Council members David Nasca and Salem Collo-Julin.

Content warning: many of the objects in the show are examples of erotic fan art.

Forward

By Jenson Hillenbrand

I learned about Slash from an article by fringe culture writer Adam Parfrey. So, when the estate of Barbara Gordon surfaced at an auction I frequent, I understood the significance of the collection. The auction is mainly frequented by collectors and dealers of antiques, collectibles, art and everything in between.

I knew the staggering amount of classic Star Trek toys and ephemera Barbara had amassed in her lifetime would sell easily and for high prices. It was when I saw the original artwork that I quite literally felt a draw to the event. I had been a weekly regular at the auction and my read of the crowd was that no one would know what the art was or its value as part of the Slash/LGBT community.

There was also her lifelong collection of Slash issues, over 2,000 in cardboard file boxes. I was able to skim through during the preview and, again, my gut was telling me an opportunity like this comes once in a lifetime. There might not be another collection of original Slash this big and comprehensive in one place on the entire planet. There are prolific collectors and passionate fans who thankfully are cataloging, scanning and identifying all the Slash materials available. Sadly I knew I did not have the funds to purchase ANY of the boxes of Slash, and for me it's all or nothing. I'd want to buy them all so they could be kept together and find the right home for preservation and the community, rather than split up on eBay for profit – which is exactly what happened to them. At least they ended up in the hands of people who will cherish them.

I decided to focus on the original artwork, my reason being that the explicit nature of them would be most likely viewed as a joke at best by the usual auction attendees. Behind a sheet, people went back to snicker, laugh and make jokes implying each other would like to do what Kirk and Spock were doing. It was the immature mockery I had anticipated and that I hoped would result in low bids and me going home with it all.
As I sat there, I was trying to decide why I was so emotional about it. I am not, I confess, a Slash fan. Not that I don't like it, I just don't actively read it. And I'm not a Star Trek fan. In that I do like Star Trek, but I'm not a mega fan. I do have TV shows and other arts interests, but not Slash in

particular. SO why had I decided to drain my savings account and impulse buy seventy-plus pieces of artwork? My partner was not thrilled. She was mulling over my debt, bills, etc. and how the money could be better spent. But she felt the same tugging inside as I did.

My gut reaction was to save it from the snickering lowbrows, but then I felt compelled more to keep the collection as a whole and find someplace where it would be appreciated. I felt as a member of the LGBTQ community (I'm FTM Transgender) that it was part of Chicago LGBTQ history, and Barbara a "Grand Old Lady" who had so sadly died so alone. Seeing her every worldly possession in boxes on tables being coldly snapped up was heartbreaking.

For the Slash art, it came down to me and one other bidder who was buying to sell them. He was thinking purely of profit. He bought some and I bought the rest. I told him if he ever wanted to sell his pieces to contact me. Sure enough, a year later, after sitting in his garage and getting yelled at by his wife for having such "filth" in her house, he came to me wanting to sell. So there I sat, with the complete art collection of Barbara Gordon. It could all just as easily have been tossed in a dumpster. I began the search for a home for the art and for a way to get it seen and appreciated again. Barbara may be gone, but I wanted her to have a last hurrah, and that's where Nick and the co-Prosperity Sphere came in...

"Change is the essential process of all existence."

- Spock

"Live long, and prosper."

Spock

Forward Again

By Anna Moomaw

... Quite by coincidence, I first heard about Jenson's K/S art collection about a year and a half after I got involved with rescuing another part of Barbara Gordon's collection. I first discovered that the collection had gone to auction when fanzines from her estate began appearing on ebay in 2018. There were, I believe, six sellers, all located in the south and west Chicago suburbs. Though I missed out on a few treasures that were snatched up by other fans (sigh), between private and online sales, I was able to acquire the lion's share of her zines. All told, from these six sellers, I bought about 23 banker boxes full, or nearly 1,600 of her zines, plus a bit of gen art.

In Barbara's collection were some rare zines and a set of K/S paper dolls (by Gayle F.) that I had never seen before in my two decades, and over 9,000 Star Trek zines, of collecting. There were also some that Barbara had contributed to, including the APA zines K/S and K.S. (Kindred Spirits), the U.K slash anthology series Duet, and Alien Brothers, the high-quality slash anthology zine that she published in 1987. The Seller who bought (and sold to me) the bulk of the zines also told me about the slash art he had seen at the auction (and the snickering that Jenson noted). But he said he had spent all of his allotted cash on the zines and a few other boxes of negatives and collectibles. I thought it was a shame that he hadn't been able to rescue the art too. Little did I know, Jenson already had!

When I read about the exhibit at the Co-Prosperity Sphere, I was super-excited and immediately wanted to see it and offer whatever I could contribute to the project. When I went to see the exhibit, the pieces were so lovely. I was pleased to see many pieces by the very talented artists Gayle F. and Pat Stall, as well as several others I recognized. Further, I was happy to bring some zines from Barbara's collection for the show. My fellow volunteer fandom historians and fanlore.org friends and I searched through our extensive digitized zine archive and my personal collection to help match up the exhibited art to zine publications where possible. I was pleased that we were able to match up most of them. For anyone doing research and looking for specific historical Star Trek fanzine material, I am happy to serve as a resource, and can be contacted at trekzinescanna@gmail.com.

Excerpts from K/S and K.S. (Kindred Spirits) #2, B. Gordon editorial, Ad Astra #1, pg 35-37:

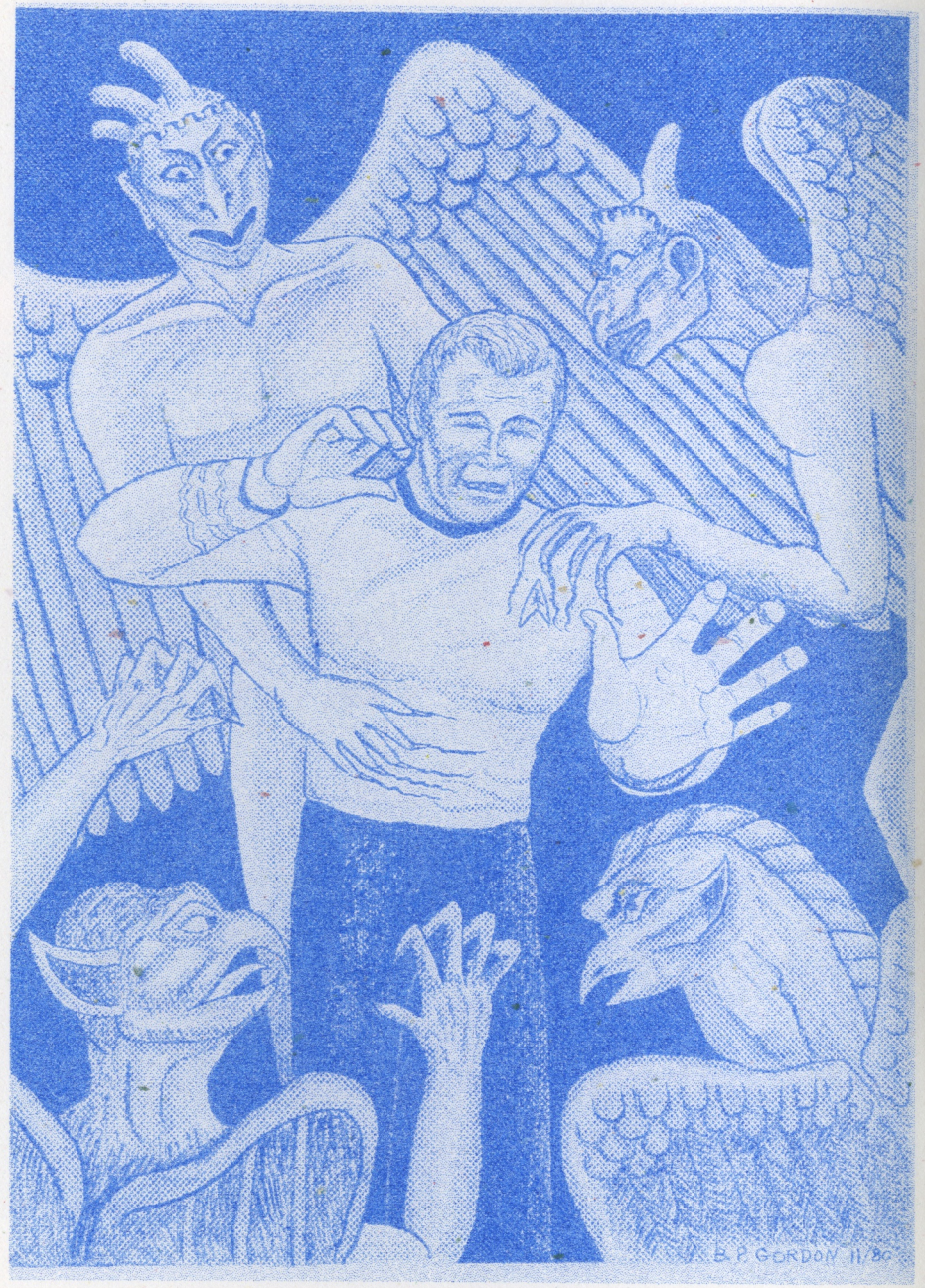
"If anyone's interested in who and what I am: I studied to be a physicist, but from bad health and lack of money (extreme!) I slid into other pursuits, successively, and sometimes simultaneously being a cosmic ray scanner, lab technician, then a graphic artist, editor, and writer for various books, magazines, encyclopedias, and newspapers, and free lance also. At the same time, I studied music, my second love, and became a pro singer and musician in a small way. I make a little cash by selling artwork at SF and ST cons. I'm married, no children.

I've been an avid reader of science fiction all my life—for decades—but I've cooled on it since discovering Trek, I am definitely NOT a media fan. In 1968, when a physicist friend of mine told me about Star Trek, I laughed at him, but he wasn't having any; he loved it and didn't mind saying so! I began to think that if he liked it, there must be SOMEthing to it. But I didn't own a TV at that time; I wouldn't have one in the house. So I read the Blish books and was amazed that such an intelligent program could ever be put on TV. But I still didn't believe it. And I really wanted to see it. My chance came some years later when a friend gave me a TV—and the first thing I tuned to was Trek. It only took a couple of episodes to get me thoroughly hooked. It only took eight or ten episodes for me to conceive independently of K/S. Then, of course, I got hooked on zines. When I saw THRUST advertised, I was fascinated. I had had no idea that someone else had thought of a sexual relationship between Kirk and Spock. I dislike heterosex porn and erotica, probably because it is so sexist, but I found that I did indeed love THRUST; I practically wore out my copy!

Since then, I've read every K/S zine, become a collector of Trek art (particularly K/S), gone to innumerable cons, illoed about 55 zines, written poems and three stories so far—oh, if I only had more time! My first story, "Love Slave's Song", was published in DUET III..."

"A lot of you said that you are Feyrer fans. Well, then, don't miss a new K/S zine called BRAVE NEW WORLDS... It has Gayle's most glorious illos to date, for which she asked me to write a story—a privilege, believe me! If any of you should come to Chicago, give me a call, and I'll give you a guided tour of the original watercolor; it is -unbelievably beautiful. What a shame Gayle won't be doing zine illoing or writing anymore."

GAIL BENNETT ©1981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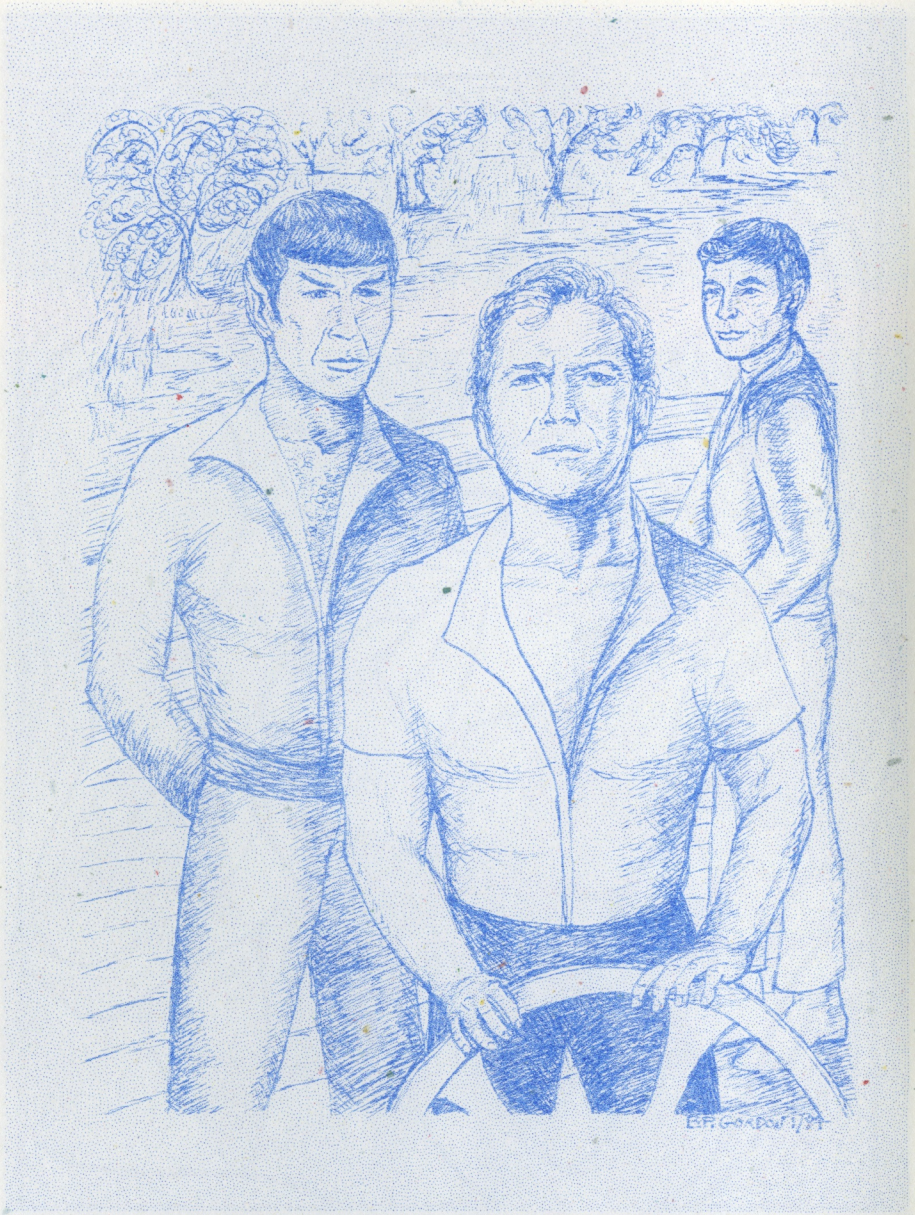

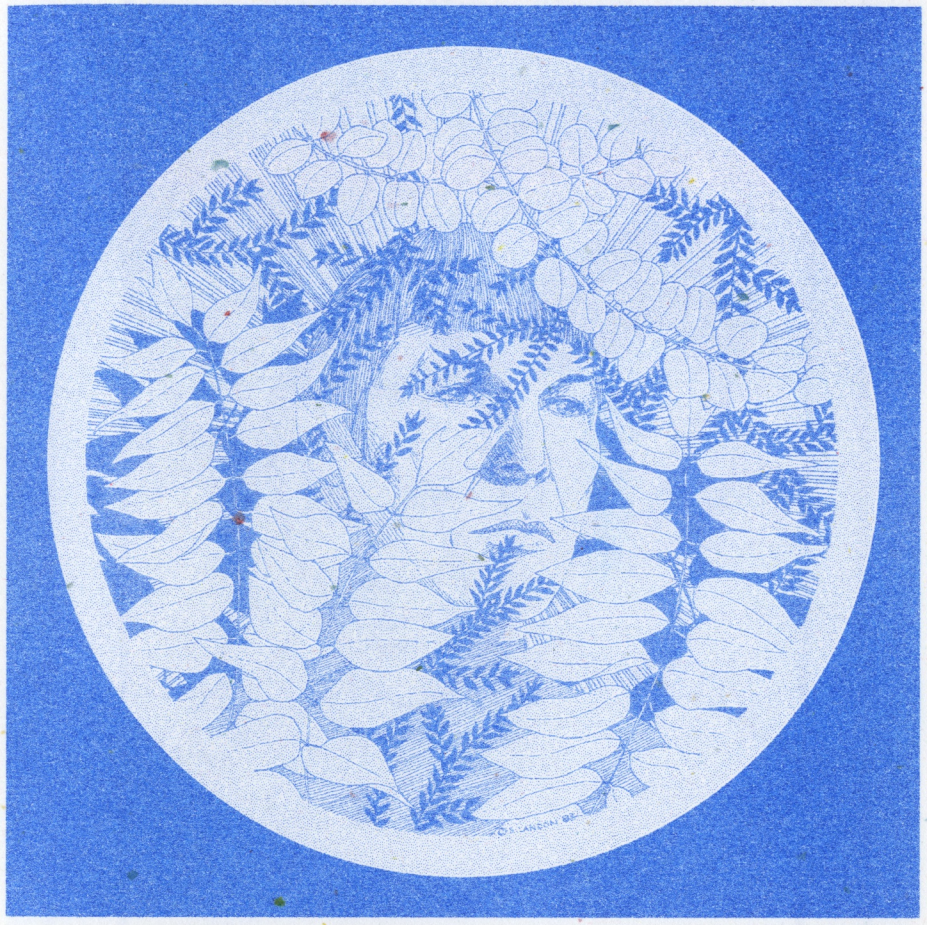

Sonia R. Gingras
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Sonia R. Gingras 79

GEORGE TAKEI • SULU
Helmsman-U.S.S. Enterprise

Excerpt from K/S and K.S. (Kindred Spirits) #7, B. Gordon editorial, Ad Astra #4, pg 30:

"Well, what with the horrible job I've got, I don't have time to read anymore, just do a little artwork. But I'm going to chuck it before the weather gets bad, and try my hand at writing, & doing graphics & illos for the small press publications. I'll most likely starve to death. Anyone who can offer me a really good idea of who to will my extensive collection of K/S-ST-SF art and fanzines to will receive my gratitude (I can't very well say undying gratitude!) I was thinking of the STW [Star Trek Welcommittee], but it seems to have such a tenuous existence. I wish there were some kind of society for the preservation of Star Trek. But with all the bias and pettiness in fandom I suppose that that idea is quite impossible."

For more information about Barbara Gordon, her stories and fan art, and her involvement in K/S fandom, check out https://fanlore.org/wiki/Barbara_P._Gordon.

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Attribution research was conducted by Anna Moomaw and Jenson Hillenbrand

Thanking Batgirl for the Queers in Space

By Nicholas Wylie

At the beginning of 2020, what seems like 50 years ago, Jenson Hillenbrand, in concert with supporting Co-Prosperity programming council members Salem Collo-Julin and David Nasca, mounted a show of artwork at Co-Prosperity. All the work in "To Boldly Go" was made by women who, about 50 actual years ago, decided Captain Kirk and Mister Spock should be in love and that it was their sacred duty to make it so.

Casting spells with their poetry and drawings, this coven of valorous time witches worked to correct something wrong with the future. Brought together by a common desire to broaden desire's space-age potential, they co-conjured a truer, hotter, more inclusive depiction of the future than the one that had been broadcast into their homes.

Today, these pioneers have a legion of descendants, now-online fans who [relation-]'ship every possible configuration of TV's pantheon of fictional heroes. Among and alongside them is a dedicated community of archivists who trace and record these alternative timelines. Traveling to the past of the future, these meta-fans diligently document the samizdat of K/S slash, the fan-made photocopied zines distributed via a sometimes-hostile postal service. Some of these cultural historians made a pilgrimage to "To Boldly Go" and taught us about the real-life origin stories of the Kirk/Spock fandom.

Folks who attended the show let us know that Barbara P Gordon (pseud. - a reference to Batgirl's secret identity), the collector and protector of all the artwork, was herself sometimes censored and shunned by her community. The experts pointed to the early Gordon piece "Loveslave," which Gordon was forced to self publish after the editors of "Duet" turned it down for going beyond their standards of decorum.

Similarly, we at Co-Prosperity took many of the pieces down when renting the space for an "Artists for Bernie Sanders" event. The advance guard of the handful of local politicians who were considering coming to the event wanted to protect their bosses from potential attacks while they assured us they were themselves *so* down with these scenes of queer space desire.

There would have been a queer narrative in the original Star Trek if Gene Roddenberry wasn't so afraid of his audience; he shot down George Takei's attempts to convince him to put some gay in the show. Citing the Southern censorship of the Kirk/Uhura kiss in the 1968 episode "Plato's Stepchildren," he reportedly said: 'If I dealt with that issue [homosexuality] I wouldn't be able to deal with any issue because I would be canceled.' Fear of "being canceled" isn't so new a concern.

It can feel like we're in time quicksand when our contemporaries angrily resist clear science, refuse to wear masks to prevent the spread of disease, call people with more melanin than them "animals," fly swastika flags, complain of too much wokeness, bemoan the reign of identity politics.

It can feel especially destabilizing if you, like me, lived so much of your formative after-school life in the pale utopian light of the Starship Enterprise, sitting cross-legged close to the antenna to keep the signal strong or because you were pretending you didn't need glasses. More recently, in the non-cathode light of the Starship Discovery, I've been thinking about how Ricky from "My So-Called Life" is so much older now, and remembering what it felt like to gawk at his MTV struggles before I was out. Now he's in space, in the Federation, and he's playing a canonically gay crew member. But it doesn't really have to be a plot point, his queerness, like Ricky's did. He's kind of an annoying boyfriend to his science-officer beaux, and he heals people and psychologizes them too much. He's still Ricky, just like.. older and kind of happy and in space. And that feel like contenting progress as imperial capitalism burns the world down.

When this has been your media progress journey, you can sort of get lulled into thinking everyone's been sitting next to you watching the same screen. It can come as a shock when your friends challenge the use they/them pronouns or choose not to march for police abolition just yet. When not everyone wants "fully automated gay space communism" tomorrow, what do you do? Wait for TV to take care of it? Maybe you follow Barbara Gordon's lead and unapologetically make your own wild, sexy, dangerous stories about the way the future's supposed to be. And illustrate them, and collect them, and find community in them. The future will thank you. We thank Barbara.

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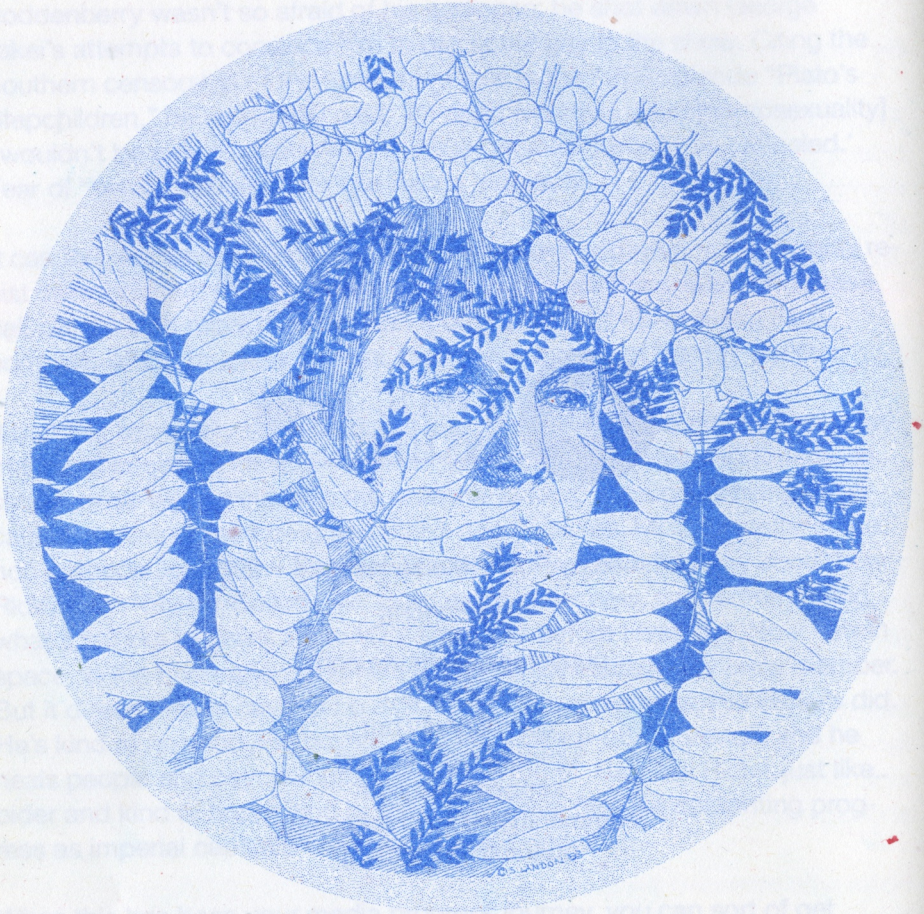

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